Proposal for Research Centre near Hyderabad

3458. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposed new genomic research centre near Hyderabad to focus on molecular breeding to boost agricultural productivity in the country has started functioning;

(b) if so, the details thereof, including the budget allotted and released so far;

(c) if not, the reasons for not commencing this vital research centre; and

(d) whether Government would assure of commencing this research centre at the earliest?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) to (d) Yes Sir. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has sanctioned a "Centre of Excellence for high-throughput allele determination for molecular breeding on 7th December, 2006 at International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Patancheru, near Hyderabad with the goal of full utilization of modern molecular methods of genome analysis by Indian agricultural breeding programmes. It will achieve this vision by providing high-throughput molecular genotyping and phenotyping technologies to a wide range of Indian public and private research and breeding institutes. The centre will undertake the following research activities: (a) develop effective and efficient technology platforms for enhancing the efficiency of basic research and breeding programs for a range of Indian crops and species; (b) identify genes, alleles and markers to be used for improving the productivity of Indian crops in drought-prone environment typically faced by farmers in the semi-arid tropic. The total sanctioned cost of the project is Rs.466.63 lakhs for a period of four years. Out of this, an amount of Rs.275.07 lakhs has been already released to ICRISAT, Patancheru. The activities of the centre have already commenced and the work is in earnest progress. An initial set of about 2500 mutant lines of pearl millet have been generated to be used further in research.